has launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on "National Horticulture Mission (NHM)" during the Tenth Plan with effect from May 2005 with a total outlay of Rs. 2300.00 Crore for the holistic development of Horticulture Sector in all the States and Union Territories including Orissa. The Scheme aims at promotion of various Horticultural crops including banana depending upon suitable agro-climate conditions. Besides, National Horticulture Board is implementing a Scheme on "Development of Commercial Horticulture through Production and Post Harvest Management", under which the Board provides back ended subsidy not exceeding 20% of project cost with a maximum ceiling of Rs. 25.00 lakhs per project for high-tech production of fruits and vegetables incldlng banana.

Launching Mission 4

1052. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether at a two-day national meet on deciding the winter (rabi) crop campaign, it was called for the countrywide launch of Mission 4 to raise agriculture growth by 4%;

(b) whether his Ministry has identified specific reasons to immediately increase production of particular crop in the lower and upper gangetic plains and eastern plateau, the right mix and ensure that the production of rice, wheat, cotton oilseeds and pulses rises from 2 to 2.5 tonnes per hectare; and

(c) if so, the steps States and ICAR have taken to improve the growth of agriculture in the country?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The last National Conference on Agriculture for Rabi Campaign (2005-06) was held on 15th and 16th September, 2005 in New Delhi. It was, *Inter-alia,* emphasized in the Conference to launch a countrywide campaign for meeting the targeted growth rate of 4 percent in agriculture and allied sectors.

(b) It is envisaged to adopt climatically differentiated strategy for increasing production and productivity in agriculture. This includes emphasis on enhancing production and productivity of rice in Lower Gangetic Plains Region and Eastern Plateau and Hills Region; and of rice, wheat, maize and gram etc. in the Upper Gangetic Plains Region.

(c) The steps taken by ICAR to increase agricultural growth includes:

- Harnessing modern scientific knowledge to develop inbred varieties and hybrids which are high yielding, resistant/tolerant to relevant biotic and abiotic stress and efficient in input use with emphasis on adoption to variable ecologies, particularly rainfed agriculture.
- Intensification of research on the development of commercially viable hybrid technology for achieving higher yield thresholds in various crops/agro-ecologies including non-traditional crops and harsh ecologies. Development and diversification of male sterility system in an important area of research;
- Development of value-added crop varieties for domestic and export markets;
- Development of varieties/hybrids suitable for mechanization, particularly sugarcane harvesting, cotton picking etc.;
- Develoment of molecular techniques/tools and their application in crop breeding with emphasis on genetic engineering of crop plants with novel gene(s) to improve productivity, stability, quality and resistance/tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses;
- Exploration of genetic diversity, collection, ex-situ/in-situ conservation, characterization, evaluation and genetic enhancement of plant genetic resources;
- Continuing research thrust on the development of economical and eco-friendly crop production packages involving integrated nutrient, water and soil-management technologies;
- Development of integrated pest management approaches for sustainable agriculture production; and
- Refinement of seed production technology and production of breeder seed with added emphasis on hybrid cultivars.

The State Governments have also launched several schemes to increase agriculture production and productivity in their respective States. The Central Government also provides financial assistance in the implementation of some of these schemes.

Vulnerability of wheat to epidemic

1053. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the impending threat of wheat epidemic UG 99 in its most popular variety of wheat PBW 343 in the country;